

Audience Insights

Communicating to Boomers (1946-1962)



The Baby Boomer generation includes some 78.2 million Americans,¹ the result of an "explosion" of births after World War II. This group accounts for about 40% of all U.S. spending.² Understanding Baby Boomers is one of the challenges facing communication and marketing professionals today.

Insights into Boomers

1. An American turns 50 every 7.5 seconds — that's more than 10,000 people every day.³ By 2015, those 50 and older will represent 45% of the U.S. population.
2. Baby Boomers are often split into two groups based on age. They are made up of the roughly two decades from 1946-1964. A more effective way to segment is by household composition: kids <18 at home, or "empty nesters".⁴
3. Baby Boomers could be starting a new family, caring for elderly parents, retired, or paying for kids to go to college.⁵
4. Baby Boomers are rule breakers. Individuality over conformity is a consistent Boomer pattern. They always have done it differently than the way it was done before.⁴
5. People of Hispanic origin comprise 10% of the Baby Boomers. This compares to over 15% of the total US population that reports Hispanic origin.⁶
6. Only 11 percent of Baby Boomers are planning to stop working entirely when they reach retirement age.⁷
7. Baby Boomers first impressions are always emotionally based, more durable and more difficult to reverse than younger generations'.⁸
8. Baby Boomers like to tell their story and the Internet has facilitated their "get it all out there and share it with the world" tendencies.⁹
9. Baby Boomers see themselves as "evolving", rather than aging.¹⁰
10. Baby Boomers are adventurous and have a strong desire to see places and species that are vanishing, and experience them before the opportunity is lost.¹¹

Audience Insights can help you to communicate more effectively with your priority populations in order to influence their behavior. CDC's Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch (SPCB) divides audiences into smaller, homogeneous segments with similar needs, preferences, and characteristics and provides CDC programs with audience-specific information, marketing expertise, and communication planning. To develop **Audience Insights**, secondary data is collected and analyzed from CDC-licensed consumer databases, books, articles, and the Internet. **For more information, email SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov or contact Lynn Sokler, Acting Chief, SPCB, at Lsokler@cdc.gov.**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch



Boomers at-a-Glance

These composites are for illustrative purposes only.



"I feel like I am always needed. Between my students, my mother, and my dog, I hardly have time for myself. I'd like someone to take care of me for a change. I need a vacation."

Sandy Duncan (*Not Retiring*)

School Teacher

Age: 60

- ◆ Single and cares for her aged mother who lives with her
- ◆ Relies on healthcare provider for health information and guidance making health decisions for herself and her loved ones
- ◆ Guilty pleasure is reading everything from history to fiction
- ◆ Watches FOX News every morning
- ◆ Listens to National Public Radio in the car
- ◆ Is never without her cell phone, and always has it within arms reach, even in bed



"We try to do our part to make this world a better place for our kids and our community. Recycling is a major priority and we just purchased a hybrid vehicle to cut down on gas emissions. If it doesn't start with us, we'll never get our planet back on track."

Jim and Ellen Smith (*Empty Nesters*)

Contractor and Nurse

Ages: 58 and 55

- ◆ Have 4 kids, the youngest just graduated from high school
- ◆ Value time with the family and creating lasting memories
- ◆ Look forward to traveling together to visit family and explore new places
- ◆ Rising cost of health care, insurance coverage, and getting sick are their biggest health concerns
- ◆ Consider themselves young at heart and willing to try new things



"I am thinking about starting my own business because I like to have a flexible schedule. I have never missed a game or recital, and by the way, have you seen my blog today? I uploaded pictures of the girls' gymnastics competition last week."

Winston Johnson (*Unemployed Boomer*)

Unemployed Human Resources Director

Age: 50

- ◆ Struggling to find work as an older "experienced" candidate
- ◆ Enjoys popular reality TV shows
- ◆ Enjoys blogging/bragging about his girls
- ◆ His biggest health concern is staying healthy so he can be around to tell his grandchildren family stories.

Targeted Health Communication

Knowing the [habits and preferences](#) of Baby Boomers can help you plan health communication and marketing efforts for this audience.

► Baby Boomers are not all alike. Understanding how a Baby Boomer's mind processes information is key to effective communication. Consider how you can make an emotional connection with your specific Baby Boomer audience.

► A 50-year old male could be a first-time parent or a grandparent. He could be the “senior” staffer or just starting out as an entrepreneur. Think about ways to get information about your specific audience in order to prioritize your segments, and reach them in a meaningful way.

► National Institute on Aging projections predicts by 2030 our older population will be more diverse.¹² Aside from race, the economics and experiences of Baby Boomers have varied widely. Consider ways to increase impact with each subgroup of Boomer audiences.

► Baby Boomers have, on average, 2 major life changes (e.g. deaths, births, and living situation) occur each year. More often than any other generational group. Address these life changes specifically and you will be able to reach Baby Boomers more effectively.

► Baby Boomers are more interested in experiences than possessions. Think about what they can “do” with a product rather than the product itself.

► Baby Boomers are concerned what they can do about their health and staying healthy. Consider framing messages that provoke a sense of self-efficacy and empowerment.

► Baby Boomers have already begun to embrace social media and user-generated content. In fact, a recent study from Forrester¹³ revealed that over 60% of Baby Boomers read socially created on-line content.

► Baby Boomers over 50 years old are largely ignored by marketers. Targeting messages and images directly to them, included with the larger issues they care about, can have a big impact.

Similarities among Baby Boomers

There are a few common trends that apply to the majority of Baby Boomers¹⁹:

- Working longer—Only 11 percent of Baby Boomers are planning to stop working entirely when they reach retirement age
- Maintaining Youthfulness—Baby Boomers are living longer and many are looking for ways to keep up their appearances
- Health Management—Boomers will redefine health care through greater numbers of individuals accessing the health care system, and by demanding that care be more tailored to their individual health needs
- Righting Relationships—Reconnecting and spending more time with family
- Going Green—Feeling a great responsibility to help clean up the environment
- Online Activities—More Boomers are working and playing online
- Volunteering—Willing to donate their time for a good cause

Differences between Baby Boomers and Younger Generations

How Baby Boomers process information	Communication Implications
Less reliance on reason to determine what is of interest, and more on intuition	Identify and employ images that promote strong positive emotional responses and gut reactions
First impressions are more difficult to reverse than for younger adults	Be sensitive to images that can stimulate negative first impressions. Deliver objective information and avoid incomplete sentences
More resistant to absolute propositions	Present information in a qualified, even deferential manner
More sensitive to metaphorical meanings, nuances and subtleties	Be sensitive to subtlety by using more nonverbal symbols
More receptive to narrative-styled presentations of information than traditional lecture style	Make greater use of story-telling techniques to get information across

SOURCE: Coming of Age: Marketing to Baby Boomers⁸

Separating Fact from Fiction

- Just 6 percent of Baby Boomers are planning to live in a smaller residence five years from now.⁷
- Only about one in four Baby Boomers fit the profile of “empty nesters”, married with adult children who have left home. Thirty-seven percent of Baby Boomers still have children under 18 in the home. One-third of Baby Boomers are single, and just over half (51%) are female.¹
- Only 9 percent are truly affluent (defined as having pre-tax incomes of \$150,000 or more if working, or \$100,000 or more if retired). One quarter of Baby Boomers have no savings or investments at all. According to Nielsen, household incomes are expected to stagnate or fall slightly over the next ten years.²⁰
- Baby Boomers are caring for others and caring for the world, with 70 percent saying they have a responsibility to make the world a better place.²²



Health-Related Behaviors and Attitudes

- Despite their good intentions, 60% of adults aged 50 to 64 suffer from at least one chronic health condition.²¹ The reality is that half of Americans aged 55-64 years have high blood pressure - a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke - and two in five are obese.¹⁵ One in three self report not participating in any leisure-time physical activity,¹⁶ and about 40% of Baby Boomers have some form of cardiovascular disease.¹⁷
- Baby boomers are likely to welcome innovative healthcare options to keep costs down before they're eligible for Medicare, particularly those 14% of Baby Boomers that are uninsured.²¹
- Some prevailing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of Baby Boomers:

I should exercise more than I do	73%
I am willing to volunteer my time for good cause	69%
Try to eat healthier food these days	68%
I rarely get sick	68%
I'm very happy with my life as it is	63%
Breakfast is more important than lunch or dinner	60%
Agree with increasing ban on cigarette smoking	56%
Consider my diet to be very healthy	41%

SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

There are some interesting differences among racial groups:

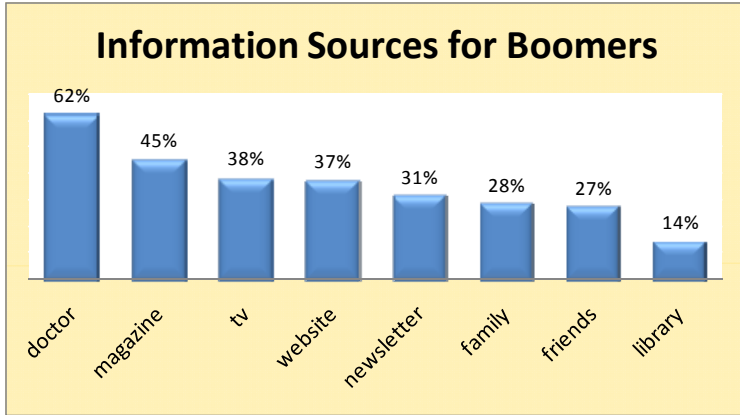
- Over 50% of Asian-American Baby Boomers reported they would pay anything when it concerns their health, compared to 35% of Whites.
- Forty-six percent of white Baby Boomers said they treat themselves to foods that aren't good for them, compared to 29% of Hispanic Baby Boomers.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Pay anything when it concerns my health	35%	48%	42%	50%
Always read the small print in ads	24%	38%	27%	35%
Always look for most advanced medicines available	23%	32%	29%	33%
I gather health information from a web-site	38%	30%	43%	23%
I treat myself to foods not good for me	46%	37%	29%	33%

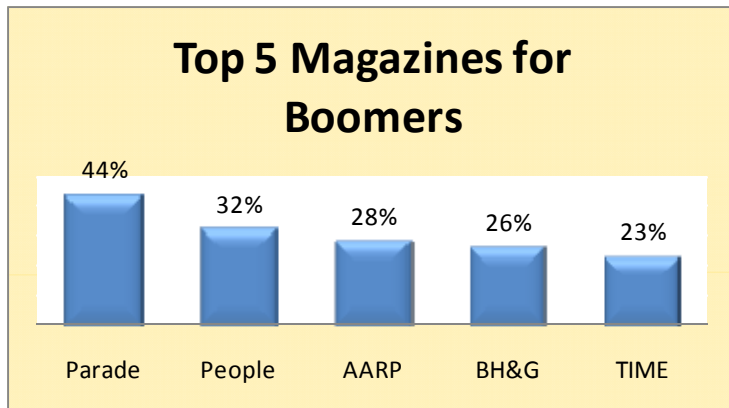
SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

Traditional Media

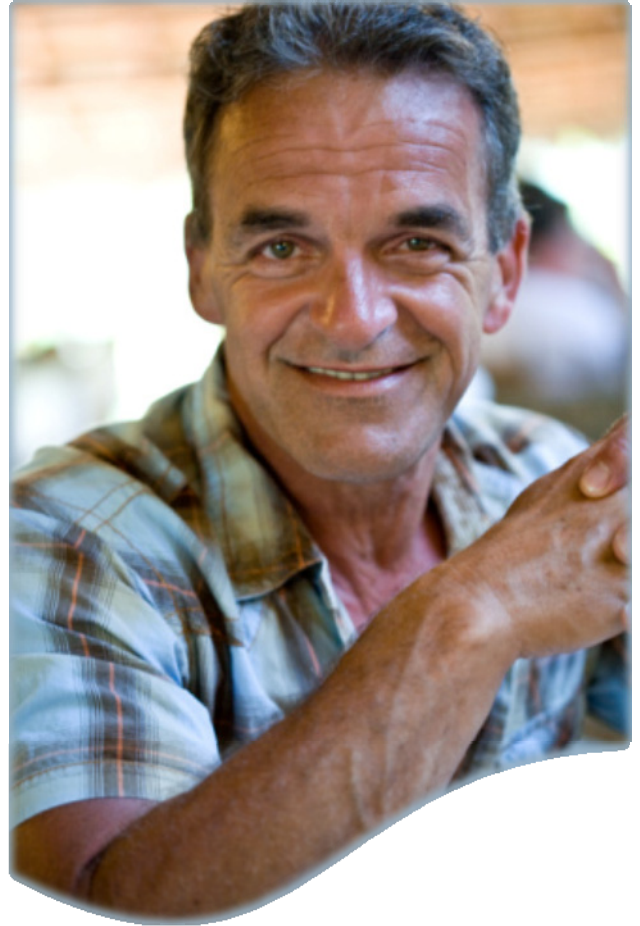
While Baby Boomers trust their doctor most when it comes to health information, market research shows that magazines and the Internet are not that far behind. These important distribution sources should be considered when selecting media outlets:



SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²



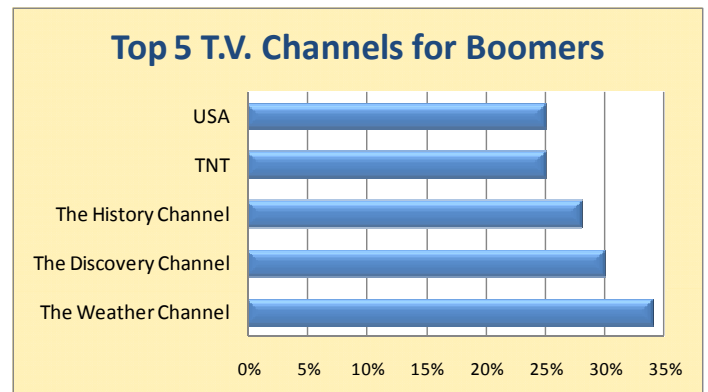
SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²



Television

Baby Boomers were the first generation to grow up with TV, so it makes sense that they still prefer this medium as they age.

- ▶ “Empty nester” Baby Boomers log 12 more hours per week in front of the TV than do Baby Boomers with kids.
- ▶ Older Baby Boomers tend to be more interested in news programs and shows on the Lifetime cable network. They are less interested in reality shows, which draw a high concentration of younger Baby Boomers.
- ▶ Science fiction programming is popular among all Baby Boomers.

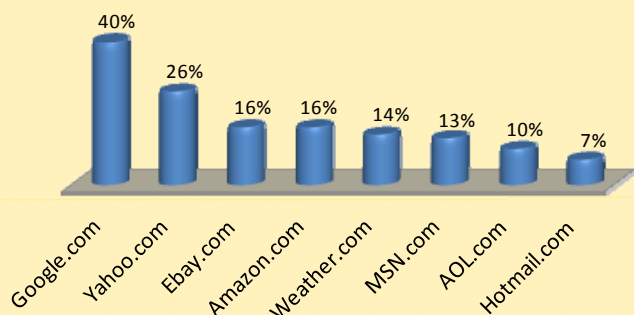


SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

The Internet

Baby Boomers invented the Internet, and are more comfortable with new technology than many people give them credit. The top sites visited by Baby Boomers (in last 30 days) do not vary widely from mainstream American Internet users.²²

Websites Boomers Visited (last 30 days)



SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

- More than 65 of the 78 Million Baby Boomers are online²³.
- Baby Boomers make up one-third of the 195 million web users in the United States.²⁴
- Blogs and social networks for Baby Boomers exist on a variety of topics. A few popular Boomer blogs according to <http://technorati.com/> include:

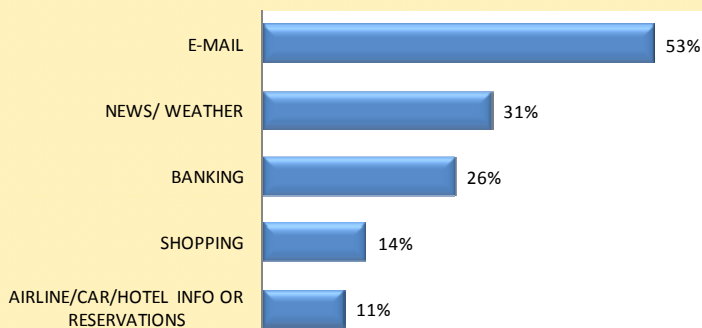
www.aginghipsters.com - source for trends, research, comment and discussion of the generation from 1946 - 1964

<http://moomettesmagnificents.com/blog> - Product Reviews, Social Networking, Parenting, Grandparenting, Recipes, Online Education tips, and more

<http://gotoretirement.com> - planning for retirement

<http://consumerboomer.com> - covers issues pertinent to the Baby Boomer Generation

Boomer Online Activities in Last 7 Days



SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

Lifestyle trends

- Anticipate a revival of non-contact, less demanding sports options like tether ball, flag tag, hopscotch, and games that minimize wear and tear on aging knees.¹⁴
- Baby Boomers will pursue long-dormant artistic interests in music, painting, or writing sidelined by the demands of work and child care.¹⁴
- Folklore/storytelling returns with a modern twist as a social outlet that allows Baby Boomers to connect with children and grandchildren in response to ubiquitous, impersonal electronic media.¹⁴
- Gray is the new power color in grassroots politics, as aging Baby Boomers rediscover their revolutionary roots and engage in the political fray to influence the electoral agenda and outcomes.¹⁴

Interests and Hobbies

The majority of Baby Boomers like listening to music, dining out, and reading books. When broken down by race, it is clear that white Baby Boomers spend more time doing leisure activities than any of the race/ethnic minority groups.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Listening to Music	66%	64%	51%	57%
Dining out	62%	40%	49%	39%
Reading Books	56%	50%	48%	41%
Gardening	44%	23%	35%	27%
Beach/Lake	40%	18%	26%	25%
Card Games	39%	33%	16%	20%
Cooking	36%	33%	35%	28%

SOURCE: Experian Simmons National Consumer Study (Fall 2008)²²

Listening to music is the most popular leisure activity. Most Baby Boomers enjoy listening to music from the 60's and 70's because that is what they grew up with, though preferences differ by race²²:

- White Baby Boomers: Country, Easy listening, and Classical music
- Black Baby Boomers: Gospel, Soul, Jazz, Pop, and R&B music
- Hispanic Baby Boomers: Latin ballads, Salsa, Mexican and Tejano music
- Asian-American Baby Boomers: Classical, 80's, Easy listening, and Religious music

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Internet: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/resources.htm#insights>

Intranet: <http://intranet.cdc.gov/NCHM/DCHM/MCSB>



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